



In business as in life, it's about what really matters-Help your clients see how important you are

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Since my last column, a lot has changed for me personally. My home was washed out, and our business went without power for a week. I'm one of the folks who was hit a little harder by Sandy, and I wanted to share my experience in terms of how it might relate to you when dealing with your clients.

As I've said many, many times, for me it's all about having a plan with smart goals. That's really the foundation of all good sales and marketing work, as a plan lets you measure and gage your performance, while continuing to tweak until things improve.

When I was putting my plan together for the New Year, I realized I couldn't escape from thinking about my own personal situation. I thought about all the things we lost: just about every belonging in our garage and in our finished basement which served as a storage area. And then the entire first floor. All gone under two feet of salt water.

I thought about what needed to be replaced: the refrigerator, stove and cabinets, plus basic furniture. Beyond that there was all the other stuff I had gathered over the years. A whole host of things that I spent time collecting and protecting.

But here's what I learned: a minimum amount of things hold a maximum amount of memories. We lost 5,000 photos, but when we went through them we probably only needed 50 or 100. I had a collection of 500 golf books. Yes, they were valuable, but only three or four of them truly meant something to me.

In business, there are multiple things we do for our clients, to take care of them and protect them. And to maintain their patronage. But the core of these relationships consists of just a few meaningful deliverables. And these deliverables are why a client budgets hard-earned dollars to use your services.

What deliverables does your client value in your relationship? If you're working in business development like I do, the deliverables are new accounts won, new orders completed, plus the amount and depth of new contact history, as well as the success achieved by penetrating existing accounts.

Take a moment to ask yourself what are the things you do for your clients. Review what you put resources against, such as filing different things for years and holding onto past records, notes and samples. You may realize that you don't remember the last time you really looked at any of this—or even if your client ever asked for them. Because what most clients are interested in is recent results.

Too many of us overreact to this by thinking, "How could you forget all the other things I did for you?" But, honestly, it's not about what you did for your client yesterday. Always remember, it's your client's financial responsibility to make sure that the expense that's going out to you has a

quantifiable return that can not only be justified, but can be built upon.

I found out the hard way that there are so many things I've collected and gathered in my personal life. And there are so many things I do for clients. But the common thread here is there's really just a handful of things that hold real meaning, real value. And it's your job to know exactly what those things are. So, ask your client, "What's the most important thing me or my company does for you?" Sometimes the client is not even sure, but help them cultivate the conversation so they understand where you're going and how you're working to get them there. Decide on a list of the three or four things that really matter, and review the list every three months or so. Because your client isn't thinking about that list every day. They might be collecting things and experiences with you just like I've collected all those non-essential items at my home that have been literally floating around for the last couple of weeks.

But there are those three or four things that your client can't do without. And those are what are important in your relationship.

That's Q from the street.

P.S. I'm a lucky one, but there's a lot of people out there that need a lot of help. So do your best to help someone out. Thanks.

Anthony Quaranta is the president of Q Group, Hauppauge, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540